

Texas alone. These jobs generate over \$39 billion in personal income annually.

Madam Speaker, engineers in Houston have also played a vital role in the construction of a new Metro light rail service which runs over approximately 8 miles of track from Downtown Houston to the Texas Medical Center and Reliant Park. This project has greatly helped the people of my district by decreasing both the pollution as well as the amount of traffic on the highways during rush hour, and by creating new affordable travel options for Houstonians.

In the Houston area, engineers have also provided the expertise and know-how over the past several decades in the construction of over 575.5 miles of freeways and expressways in the 10-county Houston metropolitan area. This vast network of highways and expressways has further helped Houston to grow into the international transportation hub that it is today.

Madam Speaker, with the advent of globalization, it is important that we work together with engineers, engineering firms and governments around the globe to foster better relations as well as create reliable infrastructures. Creating a more global and standardized network of reliable infrastructure would seek to improve transnational relations through increased trade, communications and further opportunities for travel and exchange.

Officially establishing the week of February 14, 2010, to February 20, 2010 as "National Engineers Week" would seek to increase national awareness of the importance engineers have in improving the lives of our citizens through public works and infrastructure projects. Also, by refocusing our efforts in education to include more engineering, math and science courses and curriculum, we can help to ensure that the United States continues to serve as the model of state-of-the-art engineering to the world.

I urge my colleagues to support engineers and their families across our country and support this resolution.

H.R. 3695, TO AUTHORIZE FUNDING FOR, AND INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY TO, THE NATIONAL MISSING AND UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS SYSTEM

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 5, 2010

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I stand before you today in support of H.R. 3695 "To authorize funding for, and increase accessibility to, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, to facilitate data sharing between such system and the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to provide incentive grants to help facilitate reporting to such systems, and for other purposes."

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague Rep. CHRIS MURPHY for introducing this resolution in the House, as it is important that we consistently work towards improving the law enforcement capabilities of our nation and ensure that criminals are brought to justice.

I stand today in support of this legislation because it will assist our nation's law enforcement officials to work together in solving crimes and prosecuting criminals. One of the biggest problems plaguing our nation today is a lack of coordination between various law enforcement and federal agencies in solving crimes and prosecuting criminals.

It is also important that victims of crime and their families are given every opportunity to see that justice is served to criminals. By fostering better communication and interaction between our local, state and federal law enforcement and investigative agencies the American people will be better protected, and dangerous criminals across the nation will be taken off the streets.

This piece of legislation, H.R. 3695 or "Billy's Law," is named after Billy Smolinski of Connecticut, who went missing on August 24, 2004 at the age of 31. In the aftermath of the disappearance of their son, Billy's family experienced many obstacles in searching for their missing son.

One of the largest obstacles the Smolinski family faced in the search for their son was the fact that there was little coordination and interaction between the numerous departments and agencies that oversaw the multi-jurisdictional investigation into Billy Smolinski's disappearance.

While federal law mandates that law enforcement agencies report missing children

there is not currently a mandate stating that law enforcement agencies must report missing adults or unidentified bodies. This creates a serious void of good information that could otherwise be used towards the prosecution of violent offenders and in the defense of the American public.

Furthermore, although law enforcement agencies can voluntarily report this information, there is a real lack of resources and knowledge of how the reporting system works. This is an important issue which we must address as it often prevents law enforcement agencies from reporting this vital information. By adopting this legislation, we will ensure that this information is communicated in an effective and timely manner.

Billy's Law would empower families and loved ones of the missing to seek out justice. One way this piece of legislation would help in this effort is by helping to secure funding for the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System—the only federal missing persons and unidentified remains database that can be cross-searched, accessed, and added to by the public.

The expansion of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons Database would enable the families and loved ones of the missing to searching for the missing person and add invaluable information to the case profile that only they would know.

H.R. 3695 would also help to create a more efficient reporting process for law enforcement and medical examiners by connecting the FBI's National Crime Information Center and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. Connecting these databases makes them more comprehensive and more likely to lead to a missing person or unidentified remains match.

It is important that we continue to examine the criminal justice system in this country to ensure that law enforcement agencies work together for the benefit and protection of the American public. It has been shown that when law enforcement agencies at the local, state, and federal level work together, more information is able to be gathered and analyzed in criminal cases.

I ask my colleagues for their support of this legislation as well as their support for the numerous local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that keep our country safe every day. I also ask for your continued support of the Smolinski family. I strongly urge you to support this resolution.